

# Byzantine Mirrors

## *Self-Reflection in Medieval Greek Writing*

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Μωρὰ γυνή τις ἡ Μακκώ, ἡ κάτοπτρον κρατοῦσα  
καὶ τὴν σκιὰν τὴν ἑαυτῆς ὄρωσα τῷ κατόπτρῳ,  
ἄλλην δοκοῦσα γυναικῶν φιλίως προσηγόρει.  
Καὶ τί σοι λέγω τὰ Μακκοῦς; πρὸ ἡμερῶν ὀλίγων  
Θεράπων τοῦ Κοτέρτζη τις τοῦ Παντεχνῆ τῷ οἰκῳ  
κάτοπτρον μέγα κατιδών καὶ σφήνη σκιὰν ἔξαίφνης  
ώς πρὸς αὐτὴν ἐβόησεν· εἶδες τὸν κύριόν μου;  
Καὶ μέλλων πρὸς ἀπόπτατον ἀποδραμεῖν ἐκεῖνος,  
τὸν τοῦ κυρίου ἑαυτῇ παρεῖχεν ἐπενδύτην.  
‘Ως δ’ οὐκ ἐδίδου λαλιάν, κενόδοξος εἰ, ἔφη,  
ὅτι οὐδ’ ἀποκρίνῃ μοι. Τούτο δ’ ιδόντες πόσοι,  
τούτῳ μὲν εἶπον, τί ποιεῖς; ἔτι δὲ νῦν γελῶσιν.

Makko was a silly woman. Holding a mirror  
[*katoptron*],  
And gazing at her reflection in it,  
As if at another woman she gave a friendly  
“hello.”  
But why mention this story about Makko? A few  
days ago,  
A servant in the house of Koterztes Pantechnes,  
Seeing a large mirror [*katoptron*] and his own  
reflection,  
Suddenly shouted at it: “Have you seen my  
master?”  
And as the servant needed to run off to the latrine,  
He handed over his master’s coat to the  
reflection.

But as the reflection did not utter a word, he said,  
“You conceited one,  
why don’t you respond?” Everyone who  
witnessed this then  
Asked, “What are you doing?” And they are still  
laughing to this very day.

This short jesting poem was written by John Tzetzes, in Constantinople, sometime in the middle of the twelfth century. The poem pokes fun at a naïve servant unable to recognize his own reflection and was part of a lengthy commentary, the *Chiliades*, that accompanied Tzetzes’ letters.<sup>1</sup>

Though perhaps trite, this anecdote about an act of mirroring gone awry suggests a double frame

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1 John Tzetzes, *Chiliades* 4.873–885, in *Ioannis Tzetzae historiae*, ed. P. L. M. Leone (Naples, 1968), 160–61; on line 1, Leone prints “ἡ . . . κρατοῦσα.” The poem comments on Tzetzes’ *Letter 1*, in *Ioannis Tzetzae epistulae*, ed. P. L. M. Leone (Leipzig, 1972), 1.11–2.1.

in which we may begin to capture Byzantine notions of self-reflection. The joke bespeaks first a certain placement of mirrors within Byzantine society. The “large mirror” that caught the servant’s reflection was located in a household of a member of the social élite—the Pantachnes family, well represented in twelfth-century texts—who had some prominence in Komnenian Constantinople.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, actual mirrors of any decent quality were precious objects in premodern societies, available to relatively few wealthy owners.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously, the joke introduces a certain ambiguity regarding the value and effect of mirror gazing. Tzetzes highlights the deception that may result from looking into a mirror and the consequent reduction of the mirror’s viewer to a stereotypically foolish figure—here, that of Makko.<sup>4</sup>

This essay investigates precisely the distance that seems to separate self-reflection from the value invested in mirrors, by looking at Byzantine texts from roughly the tenth through the twelfth century. My investigation aims to illuminate some aspects of the cultural history of mirrors in Byzantium, especially in relation to notions and representations of subjectivity.<sup>5</sup> The word “subjectivity,” which I take to refer loosely to those varied elements—such as views and narratives, practices and relations—that might define one’s experience of oneself, is used strategically here. At least since Plato’s *Alcibiades* and Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, mirrors have had a long history of asso-

2 See P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge, 1993), 212.

3 Before the 18th century and the industrial production of mirrors in western Europe (primarily in France) mirrors were, as Sabine Melchior-Bonnet remarks, “small, rare, expensive, valuable”; S. Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror: A History*, trans. K. H. Jewett (New York, 2000), 1; see also p. 2: “The mirror’s transformation from luxury object to everyday trinket, so well integrated into our daily life today, developed slowly.” As far as I know, there exists no archaeological survey of Byzantine mirrors.

4 The story of Makko, also known as Akko, is recorded in the *Suda* (alpha.946) as well as in many other Byzantine *lexika*. On Akko as a legendary figure of female foolishness, see further J. J. Winkler, “Akko,” *Classical Philology* 77, no. 2 (1982): 137–38.

5 On this cultural history, see Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror*, with J. Miller, *On Reflection* (London, 1998). For comparable work on western medieval literature, see F. Pomel, ed., *Miroirs et jeux de miroirs dans la littérature médiévale* (Rennes, 2003), and J. Bryan, *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 2008).

ciation with notions of selfhood in Greek philosophy, literature, and beyond.<sup>6</sup> What medieval Greek writing might reveal about Byzantine varieties of subjectivity will be our concern here.

### A Mirror, Transparent and Newly Polished

It is appropriate to begin with two texts that exemplify the most common way in which mirrors appeared in medieval Greek writing. The first is from the *Book of Ceremonies*, a compilation that was authorized by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in the 950s and that offered prescriptions for court ceremonial from earlier sources.<sup>7</sup> In its preface (*Book of Ceremonies* 1) we read the following:

Πολλὰ γὰρ οίδε τῷ μακρῷ χρόνῳ συναπολήγειν . . . μεθ’ ὧν καὶ τὸ μέγα χρῆμα καὶ τίμιον, ἡ τῆς βασιλείου τάξεως ἔκθεσίς τε καὶ ὑποτύπωσις, ἡς παροραθείσης καὶ, οἷον εἰπεῖν, ἀπονεκρωθείσης, ἀκαλλώπιστον τῷ δόντι καὶ δυσειδῆ τὴν βασιλείαν ἦν καθορᾶν. “Ωσπερ γὰρ σώματος μὴ εὐσχημόνως διαπεπλασμένου, ἀλλὰ φύρδην καὶ οὐκ εὐαρμόστως τῶν μελῶν αὐτῷ συγκειμένων ἀταξίαν ἄν τις τὸ τοιοῦτον προσείποι· οὕτω καὶ τοῦ βασιλικοῦ πολιτεύματος μὴ τάξει ἀγομένου καὶ κυβερνωμένου, κατ’ οὐδὲν διοίσει τῆς ιδιωτικῆς καὶ ἀνελευθέρου διαγωγῆς. “Ιν’ οὖν μὴ τούτο γένηται καὶ δόξωμεν ἀτάκτως φερόμενοι τὴν βασιλικὴν καθυβρίζειν μεγαλειότητα, δεῖν ὥρθημεν, δσα τε παρὰ τῶν παλαιοτέρων ἐφευρέθη καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἐωρακότων

6 For Plato’s *Alcibiades*, see, e.g., C. Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford, 2006), 344–59; for Pauline mirrors, see N. Hugedé, *La métaphore du miroir dans les Epîtres de saint Paul aux Corinthiens* (Neuchâtel, 1957). For the endurance of the metaphor, see R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, 1979), and L. Enterline, *The Tears of Narcissus: Melancholia and Masculinity in Early Modern Writing* (Stanford, 1995). For a useful overview of notions of subjectivity in general, see C. Schrag, *The Self after Postmodernity* (New Haven, 1997).

7 On this text, see M. McCormick, “Analyzing Imperial Ceremonies,” *JÖB* 35 (1985): 1–20; A. M. Cameron, “The Construction of Court Ritual: The Byzantine Book of Ceremonies,” in *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, ed. D. Cannadine and S. Price (Cambridge, 1987), 106–36; R. Morris, “Beyond the *De Ceremoniis*,” in *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. C. Cubitt (Turnhout, 2003), 235–54; and M. Featherstone, “Further Remarks on the *De Ceremoniis*,” *BZ* 97 (2004): 113–21.

διηγγέλθη καὶ παρ' ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐθεάθη καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐνηργήθη, ταῦτα . . . τῷ παρόντι ἐκθέσθαι φίλοτεχνήματι . . . καὶ οἴόν τι κάτοπτρον διαυγὲς καὶ νεόσμηκτον ἐν μέσοις τοῖς ἀνακτόροις ἰδρύσασθαι, ἐν ὧ καὶ τὰ τῇ βασιλείῳ ἀρχῇ πρέποντα καὶ τὰ τῷ συγκλητικῷ συστήματι ἄξια κατοπτευόμενα, ἐν τάξει καὶ κόσμῳ αἱ τοῦ κράτους ἡνίαι διεξάγοιντο.

Ως ἂν δὲ σαφῆ καὶ εὐδιάγνωστα εἰεν τὰ γεγραμμένα, καὶ καθωμιλημένη καὶ ἀπλουστέρᾳ φράσει κεχρήμεθα καὶ λέξεσι ταῖς αὐταῖς καὶ ὀνόμασι τοῖς ἐφ' ἔκαστῳ πράγματι πάλαι προσ-αρμοσθεῖσι καὶ λεγομένοις, ὑφ' ὧν τοῦ βασιλείου κράτους ρύθμῳ καὶ τάξει φερομένου, εἰκονίζοι μὲν τοῦ δημιουργοῦ τὴν περὶ τόδε τὸ πᾶν ἀρμονίαν καὶ κίνησιν, καθορῷτο δὲ καὶ τοῖς ὑπὸ χείρᾳ σεμνοπρεπέστερον, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἥδυτερόν τε καὶ θαυμαστότερον.<sup>8</sup>

Many things die out over time. . . . Among them, that valuable thing, the setting forth and regulating of imperial ceremonial order [*taxis*]. Since this was neglected and, in a manner of speaking, was dying out, the empire became an unseemly sight indeed. The name for such a thing is “disorder,” as is the case for a body that is not decorously fashioned, but has its parts joined in a confused and unfitting fashion. Thus also the imperial polity which is not guided and governed by ceremonial order will not differ much from amateurish and unpolished conduct. Therefore, lest this happen and, in our disorderly conduct, we would seem to insult the imperial grandeur, we thought it necessary to . . . set forth in this present precious work those ceremonies that were devised by our ancient predecessors, reported by past witnesses, seen by us ourselves, and executed by us . . . and to institute this work in the very middle of the palace just like a mirror [*katoptron*], transparent and newly polished, in which both what is appropriate to imperial authority and what is worthy of the senatorial body might be seen and thus the reins of power might be handled in order and with proper decorum.

<sup>8</sup> Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Le livre des cérémonies*, ed. A. Vogt, vol. 1 (Paris, 1935), 1–2.

We have used everyday simple style as well as words and designations as they have been assigned to each thing and action in the past and as they are called today, so that the text [*ta geogrammena*] is clear and easily understood. If imperial rule is led in rhythm and order by this text, it will be an image of the universal harmony and movement of the Creator, and it will be gazed upon by its subjects as being more solemn and, therefore, more pleasing and admirable.

The second passage is from one of the *Ethical Discourses* by Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022). These speeches were originally proclaimed within the context of monastic ritual (during or after a service, a meal, or a common prayer) and were published posthumously by Symeon’s student Niketas Stethatos, sometime in the middle of the eleventh century. Here is some of the advice that Symeon had for his monastic community:

Βλέπειν οὖν ἔαυτοὺς ἡμᾶς χρή, ἀδελφοί, καὶ κατανοεῖν ἀκριβώς τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν, εἰ τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν εὐαγγελισθέντα ἡμῖν ἐδεξάμεθα καὶ ἐν ἔαυτοῖς ἡμῖν αὐτὸν κεκτήμεθα, ἵνα, καθὼς ὁ εὐαγγελιστὴς Ἰωάννης φησί, γνῶμεν εἰ ἔξουσίαν ἐλάβομεν παρ' αὐτοῦ τέκνα Θεοῦ γενέσθαι. Προσεχέτω τοιγαροῦν τοῖς λεγομένοις ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγίων Γραφῶν ἔκαστος καὶ ἔαυτὸν κατανοείτω . . . μὴ μάτην ἔαυτὸν φρεναπατῶν, πιστὸς εἶναι οἰόμενος, ἀπιστος εὑρεθήσεται, καὶ τὸν Κύριον ἔχειν νομίζων ἐν ἔαυτῷ κενὸς ἐξέλθῃ τοῦ σώματος . . . καὶ εἰς τὸ πῦρ ἐμβληθήσεται. Πόθεν οὖν γνωσόμεθα εἰ ἐν ἡμῖν ὁ Χριστός ἐστι, καὶ πῶς ἔαυτοὺς ἡμᾶς καταμάθωμεν; Τὰ ἀπὸ τῶν θείων Γραφῶν λόγια ἀναλεγόμενοι καὶ ἀντιπαρατιθούντες ὡς ἐσοπτρα ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἡμῶν, ἐν αὐτοῖς ὅλους ἔαυτοὺς καταμάθωμεν.

. . . Ιδού τὸ κάτοπτρον ὃ προείπον ὑμῖν οὕτοι οἱ λόγοι εἰσίν. Καὶ σκόπει μοι τῶν εὐαγγελικῶν ρήματων τὸ ἀκριβές, πῶς τρανῶς διδάσκει ἡμᾶς τῶν πιστῶν τὰ γνωρίσματα, ἵνα καὶ ἔαυτοὺς ἡμᾶς ἔκαστος καὶ τοὺς πλησίον ἐπιγινώσκωμεν.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Symeon the New Theologian, *Ethical Discourse 10.350–65* and *426–49*, in *Traité théologiques et éthiques*, ed. J. Darrouzès, SC 129 (Paris, 1967).

We must look at ourselves, O brothers, and examine scrupulously our souls <to see> whether we have received our Lord Jesus, who was proclaimed to us, and whether we possess him in our own selves so that, just as the evangelist John says, we might know if we have received from him the authority to become children of God [John 1:12]. Each one of you should pay heed to the words of the holy scriptures and come to understand himself . . . lest, while deceiving himself to no purpose and thinking that he is faithful, he might be found faithless, and, while believing that he has Christ in him, he will exit his body empty <of Christ's presence> . . . and will be cast away into the fire [Eph. 6:19]. How will we come to know if Christ is in us? And how will we understand our own selves? If we read the words of the divine scriptures and place them as mirrors [*esoptra*] for our souls, we will understand our whole selves in them.

... [After a series of biblical quotes on the incarnate Christ and his adoption of humankind, primarily from the beginning of the Gospel of John, especially 1:12–14, Symeon continues:] Behold, these words are the mirror [*katoptron*] that I mentioned to you before. Examine how precise the words of the Gospel are, how clearly they teach us the characteristic marks of the faithful, so that each one of us might come to know ourselves and our neighbor.

Though they stem from rather different social settings and would have served somewhat different purposes, the two passages are alike in using the notion of mirrors. Both are metaphorical mirrors, tokens in each case of a core text for a Byzantine audience: the *Book of Ceremonies* and the Bible, respectively. In addition, neither metaphorical mirror is used for *self*-reflection, as one might perhaps expect—that is, these “mirrors” are not employed to enable their “viewers” to see themselves. Instead, both offer a glimpse of a better self, a superior exemplar. The readers of the *Book of Ceremonies* are meant to see reflected not reality but, rather, an idealized form of courtly life as an image of divine order. Similarly, the reader of the Bible, according to Symeon, should see himself not simply as he is but also as he *should* be, bearing “the characteristic

marks of the faithful.” As Symeon makes clear later in the same speech, “we see only a mirror image of the sea of His glory . . . [:] during this present life, we see, in a spiritual fashion, ourselves similar to Him who is seen by us and who sees us.”<sup>10</sup> The metaphorical mirror’s image carries a likeness of the divine.

In both cases, mirrors thus function as means by which some kind of normative expectation may be established. The reader is confronted with reflected images—of proper ceremonial order at the court and of the ideal self—so that he too, whether a courtier or a monk, might take on these reflections and become himself an image of the divine. Mirrors are here instituted for the sake of *taxis*, a key term for both texts. In the *Book of Ceremonies*, *taxis* refers to the proper arrangement of ceremonial acts, especially as pertains to the hierarchical positioning and movement of the various participants. In Symeon’s *Ethical Discourses*, *taxis* refers to spiritual order and hierarchy.<sup>11</sup>



If one turns from these two passages to other texts written in this period, it becomes clear that the most common way in which mirrors are used in middle Byzantine texts is similar to what is put forth above. Byzantine writers seem preoccupied (one might dare say obsessed) with metaphorical mirrors and relevant acts, as is evident in more than eighty percent of the approximately 450 instances of the near synonymous stems *katoptr-*, *enoptr-*, and *e(i)soptr-* surveyed for this essay. By contrast, actual mirrors are mentioned much less frequently and primarily in scientific and antiquarian discourses—such as grammar books, lexica, and treatises on the natural sciences—with citations of, or allusions to, pre-Byzantine texts.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., lines 716–26. See further 10.471–86 and idem, *Katechesis* 31.28–29, in *Catéchéses*, ed. B. Krivochéine and J. Paramelle, SC 113 (Paris, 1965).

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., *Ethical Discourse* 6.429–36, where heavenly order is explicitly paralleled to imperial order.

<sup>12</sup> This survey was based on a search of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* database in August 2008 that presented 333 authors or texts from the 7th to the 12th century and about 450 instances of the stems *katoptr-*, *enoptr-*, and *e(i)soptr-*, which were treated as more or less synonymous in Byzantium; cf. *Suda*, epsilon.1391 and 3165. I also examined another 129 cases of the stem *dioptr-*, which, apart from its main meaning as “seeing through,” could occasionally refer

And, as is the case in the two previously cited passages, metaphorical mirrors are imagined as objects that propagate a certain norm or order. “Mirroring” surfaces include such things as the scriptures (or similar texts such as saints’ Lives), icons, holy men, and souls purified by virtue, and none are presented as enabling self-reflection. Almost exclusively, these “mirrors” reflect images of divine order and project models for imitation rather than likenesses of their viewer.<sup>13</sup>

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also to mirrors and mirroring. Cf. the entry on *dioptora* in two manuscripts of the *Etymologicum Gudianum*, the Vatican Barb. gr. 70 and Paris. suppl. gr. 172, where *dioptora*, *katoptron*, *enoptron*, and *esoptron* are presented as synonyms; *Etymologicum Gudianum*, ed. E. L. de Stefani, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1909–20), 2:367.20–21. It should be noted that with one exception—that of the late 11th-century *Dioptora*—mirror terms did not become a title-formula in Byzantine texts, a practice that was a verbal fixation in medieval western writing; see H. Grabes, *The Mutable Glass: Mirror-Imagery in Titles and Texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1982). Such a title as, e.g., W. Blum’s *Byzantinische Fürstenspiegel* (Stuttgart, 1981) is thus somewhat misleading.

13 Here is a selective list of some representative examples. The scriptures as “mirrors”: *Sacra parallela* (8th c.?), PG 96:269.34–36, with Athanasius of Alexandria, *Letter to Marcellinus* 11–12 (PG 27:24), trans. E. Ferguson, *Ἐκκλησιαστικός Φάρος* 60 (1978): 380–81, a passage often used in prefaces to Greek Psalters; see A. Hamilton, “Athanasius and the Simile of the Mirror,” *VChr* 34 (1980): 14–18.

Saints’ Lives and patristic texts as “mirrors”: George Pisides (7th c.), *Laudatio sancti Anastasii Persae* 3.14–21, in *Saint Anastase le Perse et l’histoire de la Palestine au début du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. B. Flusin, vol. 1 (Paris, 1992); Symeon the New Theologian, *Kephalaia Praktika kai Theologika* 1.49, in *Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques et pratiques*, ed. J. Darrouzès, SC 51 (Paris, 1996); Gregorios the Monk (11th c.), *Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion* (this text dates, according to Greenfield, to ca. 1058), Preface, in *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, ed. H. Delehaye, Tomus III (Brussels, 1910), 508–9, with R. P. H. Greenfield, *The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: An Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint* (Washington, DC, 2000); Michael Choniates (late 12th c.), *Oration 2*, in *Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτος τοῦ Χωνιάτου τὰ σωζόμενα*, ed. S. P. Lampros, vol. 1 (Athens, 1879), 43.22–25.

Icons as “mirrors”: John of Damascus, *Orationes de imaginibus tres* 2.5 = 3.2, in *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, ed. P. B. Kotter, vol. 3, Patristische Texte und Studien 17 (Berlin, 1975); Ps.-John of Damascus, *Epistula ad Theophilum imperatorem de sanctis et venerandis imaginibus* 4, PG 95:349.43–51; Patriarch Nikephoros I (early 9th c.), *Refutatio et eversio definitionis synodalis anni 815*, 149.26–34, in *Nicephori Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Refutatio et Eversio Definitionis Synodalis Anni 815*, ed. J. Featherstone, CCGS 33 (Turnhout, 1997); Theodore of Stoudios (early 9th c.), *Parva Catechesis* 15.40–43, in *Theodori Studitis Parva Catechesis*, ed. E. Auvray (Paris, 1891).

Saints as “mirrors”: Ignatios the Deacon (9th c., first half), *Vita Gregorii Decapolitae, prooimion*, in *Ignatios Diakonos und die*

What might be the significance of this? Such rhetoric was, to some extent, inherited from earlier discourse.<sup>14</sup> Yet, for both the earlier and the middle Byzantine writers, an obsession with metaphorical reflections was related to the distinct position of real mirrors in Byzantine society. Just as the latter bore material value and signified a high social standing, so too metaphorical mirrors could highlight the symbolic significance of sacred texts, icons, and saints for a Byzantine audience. Indeed, such objects and subjects carried a superior social value. Unlike the real mirrors of everyday life, these metaphorical mirrors could offer to the Byzantine viewer sharper reflections by being imagined as pure and, as the preface to the *Book of Ceremonies* put it, “transparent.”

More importantly, metaphorical mirrors could capture the insistence that permeates much Byzantine discourse (regardless of genre, audience, and occasion) on typified and idealized models of subjectivity by which, beyond one’s social relations and material possessions, one could and should fashion oneself. That this is the case is also apparent from the opposite perspective, namely the remarkable reluctance of Byzantine writers to write about gazing at *oneself* in a mirror and thus to pursue a concept of subjectivity based on the intricacies and complications of self-reflection. The instances are truly rare (I have counted about ten—most of which are discussed below) and the usual attitude is to present such gazing in a negative light. It is seen as an act done by markedly inferior subjects, with whom Byzantine readers are *not* to identify.

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*Vita des Hl. Gregorios Dekapolites*, ed. G. Makris, Byzantinisches Archiv 17 (Stuttgart, 1997).

The inner self of the perfected Christian as “mirror”: Anastasios of Sinai (7th c.), *Sermo I in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei* 2.1–8 and 5.33–48, ed. K.-H. Uthemann, in *Sermones duo in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei necnon opuscula adversus Monotheletas*, CCGS 12 (Turnhout, 1985); Ps.-John of Damascus (10th c.?), *Life of Barlaam and Ioasaph*, in *Barlaam and Joasaph*, ed. H. Mattingly and G. R. Woodward (Cambridge, MA, 1914), 294.9–10; Symeon the New Theologian, *Ethical Discourse* 10.879–889 and passim; Theophylact of Ochrid (late 11th c.), *Letter 85.87–90*, in *Lettres*, ed. P. Gautier, CFHB, Series Thessalonicensis 16.2 (Thessalonike, 1986). Cf. also Gregory of Nazianzus *Or. 2.7*.

14 Three recurrent mirror metaphors present in Byzantine writing stem from biblical (and relevant patristic) discourse: *Sapientia Salomonis* 7.26 (with Gregory of Nazianzus *Or. 2.7*; see previous note), 1 Cor. 13:12, and 2 Cor. 3:18.

We have already encountered the example of Tzetzes' ridiculous servant, whose self-reflection is the matter of a joke. The servant—who, significantly, remains nameless—is presumed to be easily deceived because of his inferior status. The treatment of a similar case of self-reflection is equally revealing. The following narrative is included in many post-iconoclastic historiographies that establish the heroes of orthodoxy in iconophile Byzantium. I will cite it here in its earliest surviving version, in the first part of the chronicle known as *Theophanes Continuatus* (= *Chronographia*, books 1–4, narrating the years 813–867). This chronicle, preserved anonymously in a single manuscript (Vaticanus graecus 167; eleventh century), was produced for the court of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos in the middle of the tenth century, and was envisioned to be a continuation of the *Chronographia* of Theophanes.<sup>15</sup> In the third book that recounts the years of the iconoclast emperor Theophilus, we read this short story about Theophilus's iconophile wife, Theodora (*Chronographia* 91.12–92.17):<sup>16</sup>

ὑπῆρχε τι τῷ βασιλεῖ παρακεκομένον ἀνδράριον,  
τοῦ Ὄμηρικοῦ Θερσίτου διενηροχός κατ' οὐδέν.  
Δένδερις ὄνομα τούτῳ, ἀσημά τε φθεγγόμενος καὶ  
γέλωτας κινῶν καὶ θυμῆδίας ἔνεκεν τοῖς βασιλείοις  
ἐνδιαιτώμενος. οὗτος γοῦν εἰσπηδήσας ποτὲ κατὰ  
τὸν τῆς βασιλίσσης κοιτωνίσκον κατέλαβεν  
αὐτὴν θείας εἰκόνας περιελημμένην καὶ τοῖς  
έαυτῆς ὅμμασιν μετὰ σπουδῆς προσάγουσαν.

15 On the manuscript and its readers, see S. Serventi, "Il Vat. gr. 167, testimone della *Continuatio Theophanis*, e i marginalia di un anonimo lettore bizantino," *Aevum* 75 (2001): 267–302. The standard edition is *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB (Bonn, 1838).

16 Other versions of the story with minor variations (some of which are recorded below) may be found in the following texts: Pseudo-Symeon Magistros, *Chronographia* 629.4–630.10 (in *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker); John Skylitzes, *Synopsis historiorum* 5.34–60, in *Ioannis Skylitzae Synopsis historiarum*, ed. I. Thurn (Berlin, 1973); Georgios Kedrenos, *Synopsis historiorum* 104.22–106.2, in *Georgius Cedrenus Ioannis Skylitzae ope*, ed. I. Bekker, 2 vols., CSHB (Bonn, 1838–39) (following Skylitzes); John Zonaras, *Epitome historiorum* 359.18–361.4, in *Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum libri xviii*, ed. T. Büttner-Wobst, vol. 3, CSHB (Bonn, 1897) (Zonaras has significantly changed the style of the description); Michael Glykas, *Chronicle* (*Βίβλος Χρονική*), in *Michaelis Glycae annales*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB (Bonn, 1836) (the briefest version); Ephraim, *Chronikē historia* 2346–69, in *Ephraem Aenii Historia Chronica*, ed. O. Lampsides (Athens, 1990).

ταύτας ὑπ’ ὥψιν ιδὼν οὗτος ὁ παραπαίων τί τε εἰσὶν ἐπυνθάνετο, καὶ πλησιέστερον διέβαινεν. ἡ δὲ “τὰ καλά μου” ἔφησεν οὕτως ἀγροικικῶς<sup>17</sup> “νινίᾳ· καὶ ἀγαπῶ ταῦτα πολλά.”

κατὰ τὴν τράπεζαν τηνικαῦτα είστιατο ὁ βασιλεύς, καὶ δὴ πρὸς αὐτὸν εὐθὺς διαβάντος ἡρετοῦ αὐτὸν ὅποι ποτὲ ἐτύγχανεν ὄν. ὁ δὲ παρὰ τὴν μάναν ἔφησεν εἶναι, τὴν Θεοδώραν οὕτω λέγων, καὶ θεάσασθαι ἐν αὐτῇ καλὰ νινίᾳ τοῦ προσκεφαλαίου ἔξαιρουσαν. συνῆκεν οὖν ὁ βασιλεύς, καὶ πλήρης ὄργῆς γεγονώς, ὡς ἔξανέστη τῆς τραπέζης, πρὸς αὐτὴν ἀπήει, ἀλλαὶς τε πολλαῖς ὑβρισίαις αὐτὴν ἐπαντλῶν καὶ εἰδώλων λάτριν ἀκολάστω γλώττη αὐτὴν ἀποκαλῶν, καὶ ἀμάδιος διεξῆει τοὺς λόγους τοῦ παραπαίοντος. ἡ δὲ τέως μὲν τὸν θυμὸν καταστορεννύουσα “οὐ τοῦτό ἐστιν” ἔξ έτοιμου ἔλεγεν, “ὦ βασιλεῦ, οὐ τοῦτο, ὡς ὑπείληφας σύ. τῷ δὲ κατόπτρῳ μου ἥμην ἀτενίζουσα μετὰ τῶν θεραπαινίδων, καὶ τὰς ἐκεῖσε τικτομένας ιδὼν ὁ Δένδερις μορφὰς ἐλθὼν ἀπήγγειλεν ἀφρόνως τῷ δεσπότῃ καὶ βασιλεῖ.”

οὕτω μὲν οὖν ἐκείνου τέως κατέσβεσε τὸν θυμόν. τὸν Δένδεριν δὲ μετ’ οὐ πολλὰς ἡμέρας παιδείᾳ καθυποβάλλουσα πέπεικε σωφρονεῖν, οὕτω πως λέγουσα ὡς μήποτε λέγειν περὶ τῶν καλῶν νινίων τινί. καὶ ποτε παρὰ πότον ἐγκαυχώμενος καὶ τῆς δεσποίνης κατεπαιρόμενος ὁ Θεόφιλος ἡρώτα τοῦτον περὶ αὐτῆς, εἰ πάλιν ἄρα τὰ καλὰ νινίᾳ ἡ μάνα ἀσπάζεται. ὁ δὲ τοῖς χείλεσι τὴν δεξιὰν χεῖρα ἐπιθεὶς καὶ τῇ ἀριστερᾷ τῶν διπισθεν μερῶν λαβόμενος “σίγα, σίγα περὶ τῶν νινίων” ἀντέφησεν, “βασιλεῦ.”

In the emperor's company, there was a certain fool, a half-man,<sup>18</sup> not at all different from

17 This adverb has been omitted in the less highbrow text of Pseudo-Symeon Magistros.

18 It is likely that the word *andrarion*—which I render here as “half-man”—means “eunuch.” This is at least how a scribe of the Madrid Skylitzes, who calls Denderis “ὁ εὐνοῦχος” in the illustration to the relevant passage, has read the scene; see this essay's Figure 1, with A. Grabar and M. Manoussacas, *L'illustration du manuscrit de Skylitzès de la Bibliothèque nationale de Madrid* (Venice, 1979), 41 and fig. 102. See also D. R. Reinsch, “Zur Identität einer Gestalt im Timarion,” *BZ* 86–87 (1993–94): 383–85, for another *andrarion*. Thersites, with whom Denderis is compared, is Homer's notoriously grotesque man; see *Iliad* 2.211–23. On entertainers like Denderis in the court, see L. Garland, “Imperial Women and Entertainment at the Middle Byzantine Court,” in *Byzantine Women: Varieties*

Homer's Thersites; his name was Denderis. Speaking unintelligibly and causing much laughter, he lived in the palace to provide entertainment. Once, he leapt secretly into the bedchamber of the empress and caught her embracing holy icons, with her gaze fixed fervently upon them. Upon seeing the icons, this fool asked, "What are these?" and approached her. "These are my beautiful puppet-dolls," Theodora responded (using the vulgar word *ninia*), "and I cherish them very much."<sup>19</sup>

At the time, the emperor was having his meal. When the fool came straight to him, the emperor asked him where he had been. Denderis replied that he was with "mommy" [*mana*] (this is what he called Theodora) and that he saw her taking up beautiful dolls from her pillow. The emperor understood immediately and, full of anger, got up from the table and went to her. He poured all sorts of curses upon her, calling her an idolater in an insolent manner, and he related what the fool had said. "It is not," she said at once, calming his anger, "not as you think, emperor. I was actually gazing at my mirror with my handmaids, and Denderis, seeing those images generated on the mirror, came to you, my master and emperor, with his silly report."

This is how Theodora stopped the emperor's anger. As for Denderis, not many days later, Theodora subjected him to punishment and convinced him to be prudent, telling him to never mention her beautiful dolls to anyone. Indeed, when at a later date Theophilos, speaking loudly while drinking and acting arrogantly toward the empress, asked Denderis if

*of Experience, 800–1200*, ed. eadem (Aldershot, 2007), 177–92, esp. 178–82 (180 on Denderis); see also eadem, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527–1204* (London, 1999), 99–100, and J. Herrin, *Women in Purple: Rulers of Medieval Byzantium* (Princeton, 2001), 181–82.

19 In the episode preceding the Denderis story, the narrator describes how the youngest of Theodora's daughters, Pulcheria, while still an infant, would refer to the icons displayed by her grandmother for the sake of veneration as "puppet babies," *ninia*; for this story and its different versions, see Herrin, *Women in Purple*, 178–80. Nowadays, visitors to the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mt. Athos are presented with two miniature icons referred to as the "Ninia of Theodora."

"mommy" was again embracing and kissing her puppet-dolls, Denderis put his right hand on his lips, his left on his rear end and he said, "Keep quiet, emperor, keep quiet about those dolls."<sup>20</sup>

A moment of a supposed self-reflection is mentioned here. Denderis, the entertaining fool in Theophilos's court, has supposedly caught the empress in a private moment of self-adornment. Or so Theodora, the iconophile empress, tells her husband in order to explain away the fact that Denderis actually witnessed her venerating icons—the scene was illustrated in the famous *Madrid Skylitzes* in the twelfth century (Fig. 1).

That Theodora fabricates an explanation which involves her gazing into her mirror and that such a lie is effective—since Theophilos seems to believe her without further question—reveals much about the expectations that surround self-reflection in a Byzantine text. Theodora is a woman and therefore, like the servant of Tzetzes' joke, an inferior subject—even if the story as a whole aims at glorifying Theodora's orthodoxy. For the purposes of the story, mirror gazing is an appropriate lie, expected of a woman.<sup>21</sup> Compare this with an anecdote by Nikephoros Bryennios about the future emperor Alexios Komnenos. Alexios, we are told, suffered a severe nosebleed during battle. Appearing as if badly wounded, he was offered a mirror by his soldiers, but he declined the offer, replying that such gazing "is practiced only by women who care for their husbands' attention. . . . It is armaments and plain, manly diet that are the adornment of soldier-men."<sup>22</sup>

20 Notably, *Skylitzes* omits the reference to Denderis's "rear end," while Zonaras, Glykas, and Ephraim omit the entire final part of the story on Theodora's treatment of Denderis.

21 Even though Theodora is the heroine and Theophilos the villain in this story, a certain gender hierarchy is still retained. For example, note how Theodora addresses Theophilos as her "master and emperor" in order to appease his anger. That it is his anger that matters seems to be the consensus among the various versions of the story. Our text reads "ἢ δὲ τέως μὲν τὸν θυμὸν καταστορεννύουσα," *Skylitzes* writes "τὸν θυμὸν καταστορεννῦσα τοῦ βασιλέως" (5.50; ed. Thurn), and Zonaras elaborates "οὕτω πιθανῶς τὸν λόγον συμπλάσασα τὴν ὄργὴν τοῦ βασιλέως ἐμάλαξε καὶ τὸν θυμὸν κατεστόρεσεν" (361.2–4; ed. Büttner-Wobst). It is only Pseudo-Symeon Magistros who focuses on Theodora's emotion: "ἢ δὲ τέως τὸν θυμὸν κατὰ στέρνων κύουσα" (629.21–22; ed. Bekker).

22 Nikephoros Bryennios, *Hyle Historias* (written sometime between 1118 and 1136), 2.7.1–14, in *Nicéphore Bryennios Histoire*, ed. P. Gautier, CFHB, Series Bruxellensis 9 (Brussels, 1975).



FIGURE 1. Denderis gazing at Theodora, mid-twelfth century?, Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, cod. vitr. 26-2, fol. 45r; from *Synopsis Historiarum incipiens a Nicephori imperatoris a genicis obitu ad Isacii Comneni imperium a Joanne Scylite* (Athens, 2000)

The servant in Tzetzes' joke, the Theodora in Theodora's lie, and the manly Alexios respond differently to the mirror, because in the premodern world in general, and so also in Byzantium, gazing at one's own reflection is a gendered activity. It is primarily women and, consequently, effeminate and inferior (by behavior or status) men that are associated with it. Unlike the gazing into metaphorical mirrors, this kind of mirror gazing is presented as negative, as it is centered on sensuality and may lead to (self-)deception. As an Aristophanic joke implied, men are signified by their swords (just as by their phalluses) and women are signified by their mirrors (just as by their breasts). This sentiment was all too happily adopted—albeit in various modifications—by Roman Greek, late antique Christian, and medieval Greek moralists.<sup>23</sup>

23 Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazousai* 135–42, lines cited also in

the *Suda*, beta.110. See further Lucian (*Amores* 44), who juxtaposes manly education—marked by “plain” diet and the use of books—to the feminine attachment to mirrors; Clement (*Paedagogus* 3.2.11–12), who chastises those women who, like Narcissus, make and worship mirror images; and Eustathios of Thessalonike (*Parekbolai on Homer's Iliad* 3.606.29–607.1; in *Eustathii archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes*, ed. M. van der Valk, 4 vols. [Leiden, 1971–87]), who remarks on the absence of a mirror in the otherwise “ostentatious self-adornment” of Hera, which was aimed at the deception of Zeus. Cf. also Ps.-Psellos, *Timotheos or Peri energeias daimonon* 320–32, ed. P. Gautier, “Le *De Daemonibus* du Pseudo-Psellos,” *REB* 38 (1980): 105–94, at 155, where mirroring is compared with the deceptive transformations of demons. Such motifs are nearly universal in ancient and medieval writing: see, e.g., F. Goldin, *The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric* (Ithaca, 1967), 4–15; W. McCarty, “The Shape of the Mirror: Metaphorical Catoptrics in Classical Literature,” *Arethusa* 22 (1989): 161–96; M. Ullmann, *Das Motiv des Spiegels in der arabischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse 3.198 (Göttingen, 1992), 41–48; M. Wyke, “Woman in the Mirror:



FIGURE 2. Cylindrical Vase, Maya Lowlands, ca. 672–830, painted ceramic,  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$ ", roll-out image, Dumbarton Oaks, Pre-Columbian Collection, Washington, DC (photo courtesy of Justin Kerr; Photograph K4338 © Justin Kerr)

Theodora's story is also telling in another respect. Self-reflection is set as a story within a story, a lie that Theodora tells her husband. Moreover, the alleged scene would have taken place in the female quarters of the palace. The narrative, that is, gives us entry to a space into which the reader, just like the voyeuristic fool in the story, would otherwise not be allowed. This markedly feminine and inaccessible space, where an empress might gaze at her mirror, together with Theodora's lie, provides some frame within which the author of the *Chronographia* can write about self-reflection yet simultaneously place it at a safe distance.

Albeit in a minute and rudimentary way, a certain representational anxiety pertaining to mirrors seems to be manifested here. The existence of such an anxiety, if we may call it that, is indeed confirmed both by the noted rarity of such descriptions in texts and by the sheer absence of depictions of mirror gazing in Byzantine visual representation. While Roman Greek and early Byzantine viewers were exposed to images of looking into a mirror, usually those of mythological figures such as Narcissus or Aphrodite, there survives—to the best of my knowledge—virtually no medieval Greek image of such an act depicted in paintings, manuscripts, or sculpted objects. Late antique aristocrats—and in this they were not alone in premodern cultures

The Rhetoric of Adornment in the Roman World," in *Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of the Night*, ed. L. Archer, S. Fischler, and M. Wyke (New York, 1994), 134–51; F. Frontisi-Ducroux and J.-P. Vernant, *Dans l'œil du miroir* (Paris, 1997); and S. Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (Chicago, 2006).

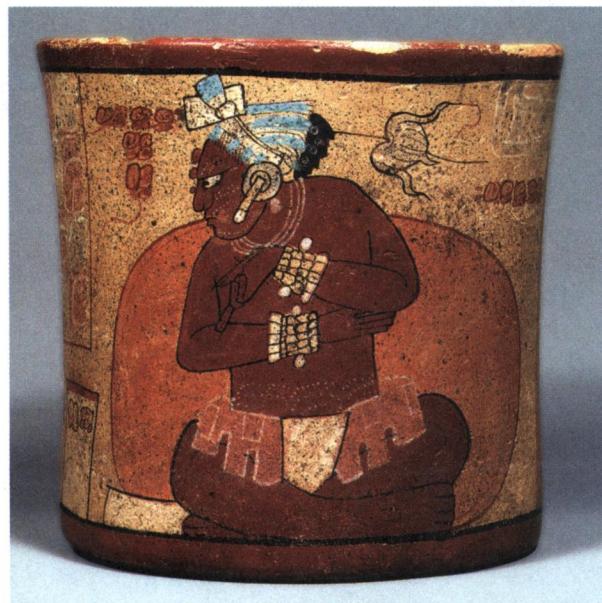


FIGURE 3. Detail of Cylindrical Vase in Figure 2 (photo courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks)

(cf. Figs. 2 and 3)—could sponsor an object similar to the famous Projecta Casket showing a self-reflecting Venus, or a tapestry such as the one from sixth- or seventh-century Egypt (and now in the Dumbarton Oaks collection) that depicts two Nereids, one of whom is gazing at her mirrored reflection (Fig. 4).<sup>24</sup> As far as I

24 For the Projecta Casket, see now J. Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton, 2007), chap. 8. Several more late antique examples survive; see, for instance,



FIGURE 4. Nereids Tapestry, sixth-/seventh-century Egypt, Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC (photo courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks)

can tell, such portrayals are not created anew in medieval Byzantium.

One single exception is an image of the “vain-glorious” monk in an eleventh-century illustrated copy of John’s *Klimax* (according to its colophon, the book dates to September 1081 and it probably is of Constantinopolitan provenance). The monk is shown holding an object that most likely is a mirror (Fig. 5).<sup>25</sup>

I. Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women and Their World* (Cambridge, MA, and New Haven, 2003), 198–99, on a 5th- to 6th-c. Egyptian lampstand in the form of Aphrodite who is holding a mirror, and 236 on a 5th-c. mosaic from Tunisia with a similar depiction. For further medieval examples, see P. M. Hancock, “Transformations in the Iconography of the Mirror in Medieval Art” (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1989); and for the Mayan depiction of the moment of mirror-gazing that dates to ca. 672–830 (Figs. 2 and 3), see H. B. Werness, *The Symbolism of Mirrors in Art from Ancient Times to the Present* (Lewiston, NY, 1999), 68–69.

<sup>25</sup> See J. R. Martin, *The Illustration of The Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus* (Princeton, 1954), 24–35 and 176 (fig. 52), and now N. Patterson Ševčenko and S. Kotzabassi, *Greek Manuscripts at*

This depiction confirms what appears to be the rule. The monk who holds a mirror is portrayed as a problematic subject; he is an example of vainglory, something one should avoid. Rather than being told to gaze at actual mirrors, the reader is directed toward metaphorical, inner mirrors that reflect virtues of an ideal Christian subject; the text proclaims several such “mirrors.”<sup>26</sup> From monastic to courtly literature, from Christian public speech to the visual rhetoric of images, the propagation of idealized and imitable forms of subjectivity seems to demarcate the Byzantine representational space. Mirrors are powerful metaphors for such forms, as long as they turn the viewer’s gaze away from his or her own reflection.

*Princeton, Sixth to Nineteenth Century: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Princeton, 2010), item 152. The miniature illustrates chapter 22 of the *Ladder*, “On Vainglory.”

<sup>26</sup> See the *Ladder*, chapters 4 (PG 88:712.21–23), 28 (1129.16 and 1136.28–30), and especially 30 (1157.19–23).

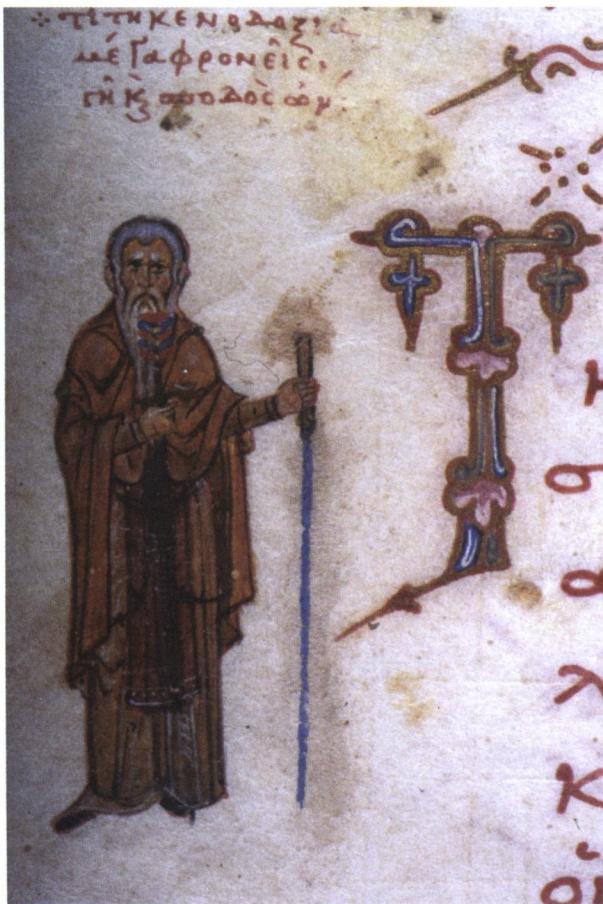


FIGURE 5. The *Ladder* of John Climacus, Princeton, University Library, cod. 16, fol. 116v (photo courtesy of Princeton University)

### Narcissus Revisited

The dominant usage of metaphorical mirrors and the negative view of self-reflection delineated thus far were not without nuance in Byzantium, however. If we turn to the realm of more private rhetorical discourse, which does not circulate widely and is evident especially in the poetry and prose of professional rhetoricians, a different understanding of reflection and, consequently, alternative types of subjectivity come occasionally into view. Perhaps the most eloquent instance is encountered in a letter sent by Michael Psellos to his close friend *kaisar* John Doukas (died ca. 1088), an influential member of the Doukas family in the latter half of the eleventh century.<sup>27</sup> Like most of Psellos's many letters to Doukas,

27 On the Doukas family, see D. I. Polemis, *The Doukai: A*

this one probably dates to the 1060s. It is worth citing in its entirety:<sup>28</sup>

Καὶ μὴ καλός είμι καὶ σοφός, ἀσύγκριτε καῖσαρ καὶ τὴν φύσιν καὶ τὴν ψυχήν; εἴτα δὴ ἐμαυτὸν ἀγνοῶ, οὕτε κατόπτρῳ χρώμενος, οὕτε δὴ ἐνθυμούμενος, ὅπόσας βίβλους ἔτυχον ἀνελίξας. ἀλλ' ὅτε μὲν τοῖς τῶν σοφῶν συγγράμμασιν ὄμιλῷ, τὴν ἐμὴν σοφίαν πρὸς τὴν ἐκείνων συγκρίνων, αἰσχύνομαι—ὅμνυμι τὴν Ἱεράν σου ψυχήν—καὶ ὡς παντάπασιν ἀμαθής, ἐγκαλύπτομαι. ὅταν δὲ ταῖς σαῖς περὶ ἐμοῦ μαρτυρίαις ἐντύχω, μικροῦ καὶ ἰσόθεος είναι φαντάζομαι. καὶ σὺ μὲν τὰς ἐμὰς ἐπιστολὰς βιβλία ποιεῖς· ἐγὼ δὲ τὰ σὰ γράμματα τοῖς ἐμοῖς ἐγχαράττω στέρνοις καὶ ἀναγινώσκω πυκνότερον. καὶ ἐμαυτὸν ἄγαμαι· καὶ πέπεισμαι είναι σοφὸς· καὶ ἐπαινῶ σε τῆς μαρτυρίας.

Πρότερον δὲ οὐχ οὕτως είχον· ἀλλ' αἱ μὲν πιθηκοὶ, ἐπειδὴν τέκωσι καὶ τὰ νεογνὰ ἵδωσιν, ἀγάλματα αὐτὰ ἥγηνται· καὶ τοῦ κάλλους θαυμάζουσιν ἀπατώμεναι τῷ φιλοτέκνῳ τῆς φύσεως. ἐγὼ δὲ τὰ ἐμὰ γεννήματα, τοὺς λόγους φημί, οὐδέποτε ἥγάσθην, οὐδὲ ἐφίλησα· νῦν δὲ διὰ τὴν σὴν μαρτυρίαν, καὶ τέθηπα καὶ φιλῶ καὶ συναγκαλίζομαι. ἵνα δέ σοι καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν θεάτρων φθέγξωμαι, φασὶ καὶ τοὺς ἡνιόχους ἀγνοεῖν τὰ πολλὰ ὧν κατορθοῦσιν ἢ ἀμαρτάνουσιν. οἱ δὲ ἀκριβεῖς τῆς ἡνιοχήσεως θεωροί, ἵσασιν ἀκριβῶς

*Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography*, University of London Historical Studies 22 (London, 1968), esp. 34–41 on John Doukas.

28 Psellos, *Letter 5*, ed. P. Gautier, “Quelques lettres de Psellos inédites ou déjà éditées,” *REB* 44 (1986): 111–97, at 131–33. The text survives in two MSS, the Paris. 1182 (P), fol. 190r–v and Vat. Barb. 240 (B) 144v (here the end of the letter is missing). Gautier edits the letter using only the Paris MS; perhaps he is right to do so, for the variant readings attested in B are in most cases (yet not always) inferior to those of P—see M. D. Spadaro, “Sui fogli 143v–144v del cod. Barberinianus gr. 240,” *Siculorum Gymnasium* 25 (1972): 245–53. Here, I offer a new (though provisional) edition of the letter using both P and B. In most instances and contra Gautier, I chose to follow the punctuation of the manuscripts, which are more or less consistent in this respect; such a punctuation better reflects, I believe, Byzantine reading practices. See D. R. Reinsch, “Stixis und Hören,” in *Πρακτικά των ΣΤ' Διεθνούς Συμποσίου Ελληνικής Παλαιογραφίας* (Δράμα, 21–27 Σεπτεμβρίου 2003), ed. B. Atsalos and N. Tsirone (Athens, 2008), 259–69, with F. Kolovou, ed., *Michaelis Choniatae epistulae* (Berlin, 2001), 41\*–42\*, and eadem, *Die Briefe des Eustathios von Thessalonike: Einleitung, Regesten, Text, Indizes* (Munich, 2006), 80\*–81\*. See also G. Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance*, Séminaires byzantins 1 (Paris, 2006), 47–55.

εἰ δημοχαρής δὲ ἵππος, εἰ ἑτερόγναθος, εἰ μὴ τὸν δεξιὸν ὁ ἡνίοχος τῷ καμπτῆρι προσήγαγεν, η̄ τῷ ζυγῷ τοὺς ἵππους συνήρμοσεν· ἵσως οὖν κάγὼ τὰ πολλὰ τῶν ἐμῶν ἀγνοῶ· σὺ δὲ ἀνώ καθήμενος, ἀνακρίνεις καὶ διευθύνεις ἀπαντα· τὴν ἔννοιαν, τὴν λέξιν, τὸ σχῆμα, τὴν μέθοδον, τὴν ἀρμονίαν, τὸν ῥυθμόν, τὴν ἀνάπτασιν.

Φασὶ δὲ καὶ τὴν Πυθίαν χρησμαδεῖν μὲν τοὺς ἀνώ χρησμούς, μὴ ἐπίστασθαι δὲ τῶν χρησμῶν τὴν διάνοιαν· ἀλλ’ οἱ Ἑλληνες, ἐκδεχόμενοι τὰ μαντεύματα, ἔξηγοῦντο καὶ συνεβίβαζον· τοιοῦτος δὴ καὶ σὺ τυγχάνεις ὁ ἐμὸς ἐρμηνεὺς καὶ θείος τῷ ὅντι Θεμιστοκλῆς· κάγὼ μὲν τοὺς ἐμοὺς χρησμοὺς ἀγνοῶ· σὺ δὲ ἔξακριβοῖς<sup>29</sup> τούτους καὶ ὑψηλολογεῖς καὶ θαυμάζεις καὶ τοῦ κάλλους καὶ τῆς δεινότητος.

Ωστε δέδοικα μὴ πάθω τὸ τοῦ Νάρκιστου· ὁ Νάρκισσος μειράκιον ἦν κάλλει διαλάμπον ἀβρῶ, ἀπλοϊκώτατον δὲ καὶ δεινότητος πάσης ἐκτός· καὶ ποτε πρὸς πηγὴν ὑδάτων ἐλθόν, τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐνοπτρίζεται πρόσωπον· ἡγνοηκός δὲ ὅτι τοῦ ιδίου σώματός ἐστιν ἡ σκιά, ἔρωτα λαμβάνει τοῦ ὄρωμένου· καὶ ὡήθη ὅτι μειράκιόν ἐστιν ἀληθὲς κρυπτόμενον ὑπὸ τῆς πηγῆς· οὐ τοίνυν ἐκεῖθεν ἀφίστατο· ἀλλ’ ὅρῶν ἐτεθνήκει· καὶ ἡ γῆ τοῦτον οἰκτείρασα, ἀνθος ἐκ τῶν οἰκείων λαγόνων ἀφήκεν ὁμώνυμον· μὴ τοίνυν καὶ αὐτὸς βλέπων τὴν ἐμὴν σοφίαν ὡς ἐν κατόπτρῳ τοῖς γράμμασιν, ἔρωτα σφοδρὸν ἐμαυτοῦ λάβοιμι καὶ τῇ ἐμῇ ἐναποψύξω σκιᾶ.

Αλλὰ θάρρει· ὁ Ἰξίων ἡρα τῆς Ἡρας· καὶ πλάττων ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τὸ ἐκείνης εἰδῶλον, ἐδόκει τούτῳ<sup>30</sup> ἀσπάζεσθαι· ίδων δέ ποτε ταύτην, ἐμέμφετο ἑαυτὸν ὡς ἀμορφότατον ἀναπλάττοντα εἰδῶλον· κάγὼ τοίνυν, ὅταν εἰς τὸ σὸν μεγαλοφυὲς ἀποβλέπω καὶ περιδέξιον, τὴν ἐμὴν καταλιμπάνων σκιὰν, τὴν σὴν ἄγαμαι ὠραιότητα ὥσπερ δὴ πάλαι θαυμάζων σου τοὺς τυρούς, νῦν ὑπερηγάσθην τὸ βούτυρον· Τοῖς δέ γε ἀνακτόροις οὐ μοι σπουδὴ παραβάλλειν πυκνῶς· διὰ σὲ δὲ κατὰ τὴν τετράδα ἀφίξομαι· τῆς δουλικῆς καὶ ταῦτα χειρός.

29 Gautier, following P, edits “ἔξακριβεῖς” but also suggests “ἔξακριβοῖς”; this latter reading is confirmed by B.

30 B ends abruptly here.

Am I beautiful, am I wise, O *Kaisar*—you, incomparable in both nature and soul? Well, I do not know myself, for neither do I use a mirror [*katoptron*], nor do I remember how many books I happen to have read. In fact, when I engage with the writings of the wise ones and compare my wisdom with theirs, I am ashamed (I swear by your sacred soul) and I am revealed as entirely ignorant. Yet when I chance upon your commendations of me, I appear to myself as being almost equal to a god. You turn my letters into books. I, however, chisel your letters into my breast, I read them again and again, I admire myself, I am persuaded that I am indeed wise, and I praise you for the testimony.

Previously I was not like that. While monkeys, whenever they give birth and see their newborn young, consider them objects of delight and admire their beauty, being deceived by their natural love for their offspring, I never admired nor fell in love with my own offspring—I mean my discourses.<sup>31</sup> Yet now, because of your praise, I marvel at them, love, kiss, and embrace them. Let me also put it in words from the world of the hippodrome. They say that the charioteers are unaware of most of what they achieve or fail to achieve. The keen spectators of the chariot race, however, know with great subtlety whether the horse wants to please the crowd or if it is stubborn, if the charioteer did not keep the right-hand horse at the turn or if he has kept the two horses together by the yoke.<sup>32</sup> Maybe then I too am mostly ignorant of myself, while you, sitting above, judge and direct everything: the meaning, the diction, the figure, the method, the harmony, the rhythm, the cadence.

They also say that Pythia uttered her divine oracles without understanding their meaning;

31 Here Psellos is echoing Synesius of Cyrene, *Letter 1.1–4* and 18–19; in *Synésios de Cyrène*, vol. 2, *Correspondance*, ed. A. Garzya, trans. and comm. D. Roques, Collection Budé (Paris, 2003).

32 As might be gleaned from a line of Sophocles explained in the *Suda*, a charioteer, rather than keeping his two horses together, might let his right-hand horse veer slightly outward while making his left turn at the turning point of a lap; with this trick, he could obstruct competing charioteers. See *Electra* 721–22, with *Suda* sigma.277.

the Hellenes, who received the prophecies, were the ones who interpreted and divined their meaning. You too are such, my exegete and truly divine Themistocles.<sup>33</sup> While I do not understand my oracles, you decipher them exactly, you praise them, and you admire their beauty and force.

Therefore, I fear that I will suffer the fate of Narcissus. Narcissus was a young boy [*meirakion*] shining with a delicate beauty, yet he was most naïve, without any cleverness. One day, he came upon the waters of a fountain and saw therein [*enoptrizetai*] his mirrored face. Failing to understand that the reflection was his own body, he fell in love with the sight. He thought that it was a real young boy hiding under the fountain. He thus did not step back from there, but died gazing. And the earth, feeling pity for him, out of her own womb produced a flower that bears his name. Therefore, <I fear> that if I gazed at my own wisdom in your letters as if in a mirror [*katoptron*], I might fall, just like him, in fierce love with myself and breathe my last breath there by my own reflection.

But take courage. When Ixion desired Hera, he created [*plattōn*] an image of her in his own soul and imagined that he embraced her. Then one day he actually saw her and accused himself of having re-created [*anaplattōn*] the most distorted image. So I too, when I gaze at your natural greatness and talent, I leave my own reflection behind, marveling at your beauty—just as previously I admired the cheeses you sent and now I am quite amazed by the butter. As for the palace, I am not in a hurry to visit often; for your sake, however, I will come on Wednesday. Written and signed by my very own servant hand.<sup>34</sup>

With his usual wide array of metaphors, comparisons, and images, Psellos paints a varied self-portrait in this letter. He projects a playful persona within the rhetorical space afforded to him by the epistolary genre. The immediate purpose of the letter is of a social nature. Psellos aims at strengthening the network ties that link him with Doukas. He wishes to thank Doukas for his praises (apparently Doukas has made a collection of Psellos's texts) as well as for the new gift (the butter) received from his courtly patron. The textual realm of letter writing, however, also allows Psellos to create for himself a multifaceted mask and advertise his knowledge and rhetorical skill. For the sake of gathering social capital, Psellos creates a highly rhetorized image of himself. It is this rhetorical mask that interests us here.

In Psellos's words, he has succumbed to his friend's praises<sup>35</sup> and fears that he may fall in love with his own literary products, even his own self. Previously immune—or so he claims—to self-love and to gazing into mirrors, Psellos has taken on, within the imaginary space of the letter, a series of apparently inferior rhetorical subject positions: an irrational animal overcome by its love for its own offspring; a charioteer who cannot understand his own performance, subjected to the judgment of his spectators; a pagan priestess whose words are unintelligible to her and who is thus in need of a knowledgeable exegete; a lover from mythology (Ixion) who has fallen in love with his own imaginary creation; and an ignorant and immature youth who, unable to recognize himself in his own reflection, falls madly in love with it and dies alongside it.

As in the texts discussed previously, reflection is evoked in reference to subjectivity. This is perhaps no coincidence. Psellos was well aware of the rhetorical force of the mirror metaphor in defining selfhood, a metaphor that he frequently evoked—especially when writing in an institutional setting, be that the court, the church, or the school.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Psellos was

33 For Themistocles' proverbially clever reading of the Pythian oracle regarding the proper defense of Athens, see Plutarch, *Themistocles* 10, with Aelius Aristides, *Πρὸς Πλάτωνα ὑπὲρ τῶν τεττάπων* 211–13.

34 Another possible translation of the last phrase might be “these words too have been written by the hand of my servant,” though it seems to me that Psellos wants to draw attention to the letter's having been written by himself rather than in the hand of the usual “servant” to whom letters would normally be dictated.

35 This is a theme that also appears elsewhere Psellos's letters; see, e.g., *Letter 33* to John Mauropos, metropolitan of Euchaita, ed. Gautier, pp. 187–89.

36 Of the ca. 450 instances of the mirror metaphor in Byzantine texts mentioned above, about 10 percent appear in Psellos. For three characteristic examples of Psellos's adoption of traditional mirror metaphysics, see *Chrysoboulos logos on Behalf of the Emperor = Orat. for. et acta* 5.2–9, in Michaelis Pselli orationes forenses et acta, ed. G. T. Dennis (Stuttgart, 1994); *Discourse on the Miracle That Occurred in*

also interested in the physics of actual mirrors, which, according to his own testimony, was a topic on which he elaborated in his lectures. In one of them, Psellos both boasts of teaching optics and catoptrics to his students and speaks of his related technological inventions that should set him on par with Archimedes.<sup>37</sup>

Here, however, in the literary setting of letter writing, Psellos chooses to present a different form of subjectivity by evoking and indeed making his own the myth of Narcissus, a story that dramatizes the dangers of gazing at one's reflection. The story was of course an inherited one. In Greek texts of the first six or so centuries CE, texts that formed the discursive horizon of educated writers like Psellos, we encounter various treatments of the myth of Narcissus. For instance, it was recorded as part of the cultural capital that writers like Pausanias evoked in order to affirm their Hellenic pedigree.<sup>38</sup> Alternatively—as in Philostratus, Callistratus, or Prokopios of Gaza—the story was employed as a means to playfully reflect on the limits of nature and art, as well as the power of representation.<sup>39</sup> Neoplatonist and Christian writers, especially those who became canonical in Byzantium, chose to moralize the story. Narcissus thus became an exemplary figure of failed subjectivity and of an effeminacy that is focused on exterior beauty. Plotinus alluded to Narcissus in his famous essay on the making of the philosophical self

as a failed subject.<sup>40</sup> And, in much the same way, the Narcissus story was employed by Gregory of Nazianzus in a lengthy poem against women's pursuit of exterior adornment.<sup>41</sup>

Byzantine writers of the medieval period would have encountered the story of Narcissus in their readings and, occasionally, made reference to it themselves. The moralized fashion of Plotinus and Gregory of Nazianzus prevailed. In Patriarch Photios's *Bibliothekē*, Narcissus is referred to as a “mad [*atopos*] lover of himself,” while a marginal note, most likely by Arethas, speaks of Narcissus’s “irrational desire” (*παράλογον ἔρωτα*).<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in the very popular tenth-century compilation titled *Geponika* (assembled for Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos), Narcissus's story is prefaced by the following remark: “of an irrational suffering [or passion],

the Blachernai Church = *Orat. hag.* 7.62–79, in *Michaelis Pselli orationes hagiographicae*, ed. E. A. Fisher (Stuttgart, 1994); and *Lecture on “My Father is working until now, and I too am working”* (John 5:17) = *Theol.* I 78.86–91, in *Michaelis Pselli theologica*, ed. P. Gautier, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1989).

37 Cf. Psellos, *Orat. min.* 8.165–177, in *Michaelis Pselli oratoria minora*, ed. A. R. Littlewood (Leipzig, 1985), with *Phil. min.* I 55.704–14 (an example of what could be Psellos's notes used for the purposes of such lectures on catoptrics; the notes are excerpts from Alexander of Aphrodisias), in *Michaelis Pselli philosophica minora*, ed. J. M. Duffy (Leipzig, 1992).

38 Pausanias, *Graeciae descriptio* 9.31.7–9.

39 See Philostratus (3rd c.), *Narkissos* = *Eikones* 1.23, and Callistratus (4th c.), *On the Statue of Narcissus* = *Ekphraseis* 5, with the discussion in Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, chap. 6. Narcissus is mentioned briefly in the progmnasmatic work of Prokopios of Gaza (ca. 465–ca. 528), *Declamationes* 1.38–42, in *Procopii Gazaei epistolae et declamationes*, ed. A. Garzya and R.-J. Loenertz, *Studia patristica et Byzantina* 9 (Ettal, 1963). For the story of Narcissus in Roman Greek, Latin, and medieval (but not Byzantine) writing, see M. Bettini and E. Pellizer, *Il mito di Narciso: Immagini e racconti dalla Grecia a oggi* (Turin, 2003).

40 For Plotinus's essay *On Beauty* and its reference to Narcissus (*Eneads* 6.8.6–16), see P. Hadot, “Le mythe de Narcisse et son interprétation par Plotin,” *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* 13 (1970): 81–108, and L. Jerphagnon, “Plotin, ou l'anti-Narcisse,” *Diotima* 19 (1991): 46–50. Psellos knew well both this essay of Plotinus and its use of the mirror metaphor; cf. *Phil. min.* I 4.68–83 (a summary of sections from Plotinus's *On Beauty*; ed. Duffy) and *Theol.* I 96.56–57 (where Psellos alludes to Plotinus's 1.6.8 while explicating Gregory of Nazianzus's *Or.* 38.18; ed. Gautier) with *Letter 36*, in *Michaelis Pselli Scripta minora magnam partem adhuc inedita*, vol. 2, *Epistulae*, ed. E. Kurtz and F. Drexel, *Orbis romanus, biblioteca dei testi mediavalia a cura dell' Università cattolica del Sacro cuore* 5.2 (Milan, 1941), 59.17–24 (where Psellos ascribes divine mirroring to his ascetic addressees, but only rhetorical eloquence to himself!).

41 For Gregory's reference to Narcissus and his perilous desire for his own *eidolon*, see *Poem* 1.2.29.153–56, in *Gegen die Putzsucht der Frauen*, ed. A. Knecht, *Wissenschaftliche Kommentare zu griechischen und lateinischen Schriftstellern* (Heidelberg, 1972); see also lines 275–86, where Gregory speaks against those “unmanly” men and women who put on “the form of another” (*μορφὴν . . . ἀλλοτρίην*) by focusing on their exterior appearance, a focus that requires, among other things, the use of “mirrors” (*εσωπτρά*). For another late antique moral reading of the Narcissus story, see the progmnasmatic *diēgēma* on Narcissus by Severus, a student of Libanius, who speaks of Narcissus's “irrational passion”; *Narrationes et ethopoeiae* Di.3, in *Rhetores Graeci*, ed. C. Walz, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1832).

42 Photios, *Bibliothekē* 186 134b28–135a3; here, Photios epitomizes Hellenistic mythography, more specifically Konon (1st c. BCE), on whom see M. K. Brown, *The Narratives of Konon*, *Beiträge zur Altertumskunde* 163 (Munich, 2002). Arethas's note is to a passage from Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus*, also mentioned above (see n. 23); see *Scholia in Clementem Alexandrinum*, in *Clemens Alexandrinus*, ed. O. Stählin and U. Treu, vol. 1, *GCS* 12 (Berlin, 1972), 335.29–36.

the reason was even more irrational” (*παραλόγου πάθους λόγος ὑπῆρξε παραλογώτερος*).<sup>43</sup>

Psellos distanced himself from this Byzantine Narcissus. In his retelling of the story, there is no moral failure. Rather, Psellos revived the Narcissus of rhetoricians such as Philostratus and Callistratus and their neutral attitude toward the moral implications of mirror gazing. Within the story told by Psellos, Narcissus (with whom Psellos identifies) exemplifies a lack of understanding. His action reveals an epistemic rather than a moral defect. This ignorance leads to tragic results, yet Narcissus is not condemned for his immoral desires. Indeed, Psellos shows some compassion, not only by identifying his own fate with Narcissus’s but also by finishing the story with a reference to the earth having felt “pity” for the youth. He also refrains from conferring or alluding to any moral judgment on a series of illicit erotic desires that he parades before Doukas: nonrational desire (an animal’s love for its offspring), pederastic (Narcissus’s love for the body of a young male),<sup>44</sup> adulterous (Ixion’s love for Hera, Zeus’s wife), and autoerotic (Narcissus’s love for himself). Psellos’s rhetorical self-identification with these subjects and objects of desire renders him indifferent to their possible immorality.

This identification with inferior rhetorical personae, especially with the character of Narcissus, is remarkable when situated within the Greek tradition. Psellos adopts a morally neutral version of the story and goes beyond the approach of earlier rhetoricians. Whereas they retained a safe distance from Narcissus, a figure delegated to the realm of mythology and the visual arts, Psellos speaks of him in the first-person singular. Narcissus is quite possibly himself: “I fear that I will suffer the fate of Narcissus . . . that if I gazed at my

43 *Geponica*, ed. H. Beckh (Leipzig, 1895), 11.24. As far as I can tell, there are no references to Narcissus in the 7th and 8th centuries; and apart from one passing reference in the *Suda* (pi. 1934) and another in a letter by Niketas Magistros (*Letter 6.6*; in *Lettres d'un exilé*, ed. L. G. Westerink [Paris, 1973]), the passages just cited are the only instances where Narcissus is mentioned in Byzantine writing before Psellos. For some post-Psellian examples, see below as well as H. and R. Kahane, “The Hidden Narcissus in the Byzantine Romance of *Belthandros and Chrysantza*,” *JÖB* 33 (1983): 199–219.

44 That the body of Narcissus is an eroticized object is made clear by the connotations of ἀβρὸν κάλλος (delicate beauty), Psellos’s description of Narcissus; e.g., cf. Lucian, *On Dancing* 73 (on Aphrodite’s *habron*), and Heliodorus, *Aethiopian Tale* 6.6.1 (on a “delicately” adorned girl, i.e., Charikleia).

own wisdom in your letters as if in a mirror, I might fall, just like him, in fierce love with myself and breathe my last breath there by my own reflection.”

Psellos’s identification with Narcissus is also remarkable when placed in an even larger comparative frame. In much western medieval writing, for instance, the story of Narcissus took on a moralizing tone. As in Byzantine texts, readers were reminded of the dangers that Narcissus embodied.<sup>45</sup> The story did not invite identification with its main character, except on rare and carefully framed occasions. Characteristic is Dante’s treatment. Narcissus makes a brief appearance in the *Divine Comedy* as an immoral and thus condemned subject. Later in the poem, Dante, as a character in his own tale, briefly catches a glimpse of himself in a reflection; from this self-reflection, however, he quickly retreats.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the closest parallels to Psellos can be found in similar treatments of the Narcissus story in Provençal troubadour poetry and then German *Minnesang*, which Psellos anticipates by a century or so.<sup>47</sup>

From such a comparative perspective, Psellos’s rhetorically playful adoption of Narcissus represents a significant moment in the literary history of self-reflection. Its contribution, I believe, lies in Psellos’s willingness to toy—in the first-person singular—with a subjectivity that deviates from stylized and idealized identities. What is at work here is rhetorical or “literary” subjectivity, focused on the creativity of language. This subjectivity draws attention to the authorial choices and the reader’s imagination involved in the

45 Cf. E. P. Nolan, *Now Through a Glass Darkly: Specular Images of Being and Knowing from Virgil to Chaucer* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1990), esp. 86–89.

46 See Dante, *Inferno* 30 (esp. lines 124–30), with Nolan, *Now Through a Glass Darkly*, 105–6, and *Purgatorio* 30 (esp. lines 76–78), with K. Brownlee, “Dante and Narcissus (*Purgatorio XXX, 76–99*),” *Dante Studies* 96 (1978): 201–6. On Dante’s use of Narcissus, see further R. A. Shoaf, *Dante, Chaucer, and the Currency of the Word: Money, Images, and Reference in Late Medieval Poetry* (Norman, OK, 1983), 21–100.

47 See Goldin, *The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric* (n. 23 above), esp. 151–60 on the “Narcissus Poem” by Heinrich von Morungen (early 13th c.; *Des Minnesangs Frühling* 145.1, in *Lieder: Mittelhochdt. u. neuhochdt.*, ed. H. Tervooren [Stuttgart, 1975]), also discussed in Nolan, *Now Through a Glass Darkly*, 123–32. See also Y. de Pontfarcy, “The Myth of Narcissus in Courtly Literature,” in *Echoes of Narcissus*, ed. L. Spaas, Polygons 2 (New York, 2000), 27–35, with further bibliography.

making of his or her own image. It is thus marked by ambiguity, elusiveness, and aesthetic appeal rather than by moral certainty and didacticism.<sup>48</sup>

The letter to Doukas is not an isolated instance in Psellos's writings. In several letters, historiographical narratives, and lectures, Psellos created various images of himself, often adopting inferior subject positions, identifying with the realm of appearances (both the desirable and perishable exteriority of the self), and making himself the center of his own attention. In doing so, Psellos brought to the foreground, accentuated, and often pushed to their limits elements of discursive subjectivity evident in some earlier rhetoric. It would require a much lengthier study to investigate this larger history of the rhetorical self in Byzantine writing.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, it might be possible to map some aspects of this history, especially in relation to the motif of mirrors, by tracing the repercussions of Psellos's Narcissus in the generations of writers that follow Psellos in the twelfth century. That is the task of the remainder of this essay.

### After Narcissus

Mirror imagery abounds in twelfth-century writing, whether in the form of the ubiquitous metaphor or in a few references to self-reflection.<sup>50</sup> Although no twelfth-century author adopted the Psellian attitude fully (no author, that is, wrote about reflection in a self-referential fashion), further nuances in the

conception of reflection in relation to subjectivity were introduced.

The first text that deserves mention survives in the late thirteenth-century literary anthology preserved in the *Marcianus graecus 524*. This book belonged to a readership that was also interested in Psellos (the manuscript contains some Psellian texts, including thirteen of his letters).<sup>51</sup> The text, an epigram by Theodoros Prodromos,<sup>52</sup> was possibly intended to be an inscription for the mirror of a young aristocratic woman named Maria, who was associated with the ruling clan of the Komnenoi:

Εἰς κάτοπτρον ἔχον ὅπισθεν γεγραμμένον  
τὸν ἥλιον.  
Ἄει διδόνυς φῶς τῇ σελήνῃ, φωσφόρε,  
νῦν αὐτὸ μᾶλλον αὐτὸς ἀντιλαμβάνεις  
ώς ἐκ σελήνης τῆς Κομνηνῆς Μαρίας,  
ὅταν τὸ βλέμμα τῷ κατόπτρῳ προσβάλοι.  
ὑπερφυὲς τὸ φέγγος, ἀλλ' ὅθεν ῥέει;  
ἐκ τοῦ κατόπτρου; μηδαμῶς ποῦ γὰρ τόσον  
σίδηρος αὐγάστειν; ἀλλ' ἐξ ἥλιου,  
ὅς γραπτὸς ἐξόπισθεν αὐτῷ τυγχάνει;  
οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲ τοῦτο. πῶς οὖν καὶ πόθεν;  
ἐκ τοῦ προσώπου τῆς Κομνηνῆς Μαρίας,  
οὐ τὴν καθαρὰν καὶ περίστιλπνον χάριν  
εἴπης ἄν, ὡς κάτοπτρον ἔστιν ἥλιου.<sup>53</sup>

48 On “literary subjectivity,” see the following studies that explore material comparative to Byzantine writing: S. Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry* (Cambridge, 1990); M. Zink, *The Invention of Literary Subjectivity*, trans. D. Sices (Baltimore, 1999); and A. C. Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity: The Encoding of Subjectivity in Medieval Narratives and Lyrics* (Oxford, 2005).

49 For a detailed discussion, see my forthcoming book titled *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge University Press).

50 Beyond Tzetzes’ poem and the examples discussed below, passing references are to be found in Michael of Ephesus, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* (books IX–X), in *Eustratii et Michaelis et anonyma in ethica Nicomachea commentaria*, ed. G. Heylbut, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 20 (Berlin, 1892), 515.12–14; in idem, *Commentary on the Parva Naturalia, Michaelis Ephesii in parva naturalia commentaria*, ed. P. Wendland, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 22.1 (Berlin, 1903), 66.9–13; and in Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Parekbolai* 4.119.5–17 (ed. van der Valk).

51 For a description, see P. Odorico and C. Messis, “L’Anthologie Comnène du Cod. Marc. Gr. 524: Problèmes d’édition et problèmes d’évaluation,” in *L’épistolographie et la poésie épigrammatique: Projets actuels et questions de méthodologie: Actes de la 1re Table ronde du XX<sup>e</sup> Congrès international des Études byzantines*, ed. W. Hörandner and M. Grünbart, *Dossiers byzantins* 3 (Paris, 2003), 191–213, with F. Spingou, “Text and Image at the Court of Manuel Komnenos: Epigrams on Works of Art in Marc. gr. 524 Followed by a Description of the Manuscript” (MPhil thesis, Oxford, 2010), and A. Rhoby, “Zur Identifizierung von bekannten Autoren im Codex Marcianus graecus 524,” *Medioevo Greco* 10 (2010): 167–204.

52 On Prodromos, see W. Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos: Historische Gedichte*, *Wiener Byzantinistische Studien* 11 (Vienna, 1974).

53 Prodromos, *Poem* 55 (ed. Hörandner). As Hörandner notes, Maria Komnene is otherwise unknown.

**For a Mirror with the Sun Painted on  
Its Back**

Sun, while it is always you who gives light to  
the moon,  
Now it is you who are the one to receive it,  
From Maria Komnene, as if from a moon,  
Whenever she casts her gaze upon her mirror.  
It is a supernatural light. Where does it  
come from?  
From the mirror? Impossible.  
(How can iron produce such brilliance?)  
From the painted sun on the back of the mirror?  
No, that is not the case either. How then?  
Where from?  
From the face of Maria Komnene.  
The clear and bright charm of her face  
(One might say) is like a mirror of the sun.

Both types of Byzantine reflections appear here. The reader is first cast amid the self-reflection of a beautiful woman: she overwhelms the sun itself with her brilliance. The norms that govern the gendered hierarchy of illumination are inverted, as it is a woman who shines with light and temporarily turns the sun (a symbol for manliness in Byzantium) into a passive receiver.<sup>54</sup> By the end of the poem, order is restored. The author retraces the origins of the brilliant light coming from Maria's mirrored face and Maria becomes again what she is supposed to be: the receiver, "a mirror of the sun." In the beginning, Maria gazes at *herself* in the mirror, but by the end she has become the metaphorical mirror of a superior other.

In only a few lines, the epigram both challenges and confirms Byzantine constraints, as delineated above. With such rhetorical playfulness, the poem points toward a kind of writing that in this period proliferates more than ever in the history of medieval Constantinople. Komnenian Constantinople is

54 The sun—as opposed to the “female” moon—evokes masculinity in Byzantine rhetoric, especially in reference to the emperor and his relation to the empress or his reigning city; see, e.g., Prodromos, *Poem 1.56–73* (ed. Hörandner). See also Photios, *Homilies 7* 81.20–25 (in *Φωτίου ὄμιλοι*, ed. B. Laourdas, Έλληνικά 12 Παράρτημα [Thessalonike, 1959]), where the Virgin Mary is hailed as an “intelligible and God-made mirror” in which the prophets saw the reflection of Christ’s incarnation.

marked by a fervent rhetorical culture.<sup>55</sup> The most significant aspect of this culture, for our purposes here, is the revival of the ancient novelistic tradition and the creation anew of a series of fictional texts.<sup>56</sup> Through their explicit fictionality, these texts provided rhetors with a space where discursive subjectivity could be further developed, though always, as in Prodromos’s poem, in conjunction with dominant Byzantine idealized models of self.

Some images of mirroring take center stage. We find, for instance, several such images in key narrative moments in Eumathios Makrembolites’ *The Story of Hysmine and Hysminias*, a romantic tale about a couple and their love, adventures, and final union, narrated in its entirety by the male protagonist of the story in the first-person singular.<sup>57</sup> Let us look at two passages. In the third book of the romance, Hysminias recounts an erotic dream wherein he seduces Hysmine for the first time and describes how the girl appeared to him in it:

Καὶ ἡ μὲν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἐπαττά-  
λευσεν, ἐγὼ δὲ τοὺς ἔμοινς ὅλους ἐπὶ τὸ τῆς κόρης  
ἀνεσκολόπισα πρόσωπον· ἦν γὰρ πλῆρες φωτός,  
πλῆρες χάριτος, πλῆρες ἡδονῆς· ὀφρὺς μέλαινα,  
ἱρις τὸ σχῆμα ἦ κατὰ σελήνην μηνοειδῆς· ὅμμα  
μέλαν, γοργὸν καὶ μάλα φαιδρόν· ὁ κύκλος  
αὐτῷ κατὰ μέρος ὥξύνετο· καὶ ἦν τὸ σχῆμα τοῖς

55 See M. Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop*, Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs 2 (Aldershot, 1997), with Magdalino, *The Empire* (n. 2 above), esp. 316–412.

56 On this revival of fiction in its rhetorical context, see now the detailed discussion by P. A. Agapitos, “In Rhomaian, Frankish and Persian Lands: Fiction and Fictionality in Byzantium,” in *Medieval Narratives between History and Fiction: From the Centre to the Periphery of Europe, 1100–1400*, ed. L. B. Mortensen and idem (Copenhagen, forthcoming), along with M. Mullett, “Novelisation in Byzantium: Narrative after the Revival of Fiction,” in *Letters, Literacy and Literature in Byzantium*, Variorum Collected Studies Series 889 (Aldershot, 2007).

57 For Makrembolites’ novel, see I. Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos, Rhetorical Pleasure: Narrative Technique and Mimesis in Eumathios Makrembolites’ Hysmine & Hysminias* (Uppsala, 2001), with further bibliography. The title’s “Story” translates *drama*, which in Greek carries connotations of rhetorical performance, fictional narrative, and emotion-provoking story; for this multivalent term, see P. A. Agapitos, “Narrative, Rhetoric, and ‘Drama’ Rediscovered: Scholars and Poets in Byzantium Interpret Heliodorus,” in *Studies in Heliodorus*, ed. R. Hunter, Cambridge Philological Society, Supplementary Volume 21 (Cambridge, 1998), 125–56.

όφθαλμοῖς κωνοειδὲς ἢ μᾶλλον κυκλοειδές· ἡ περὶ τὴν ἐπιβλεφαρίδα θρὶξ παντελῶς ἐμελαίνετο· καὶ ἡν δὲ τῆς κόρης ὀφθαλμὸς ὅντως Ἐρωτοκάτοπτρον.<sup>58</sup>

She fixed her eyes on the ground, but my whole gaze pierced the face of the girl. For it was full of light, full of charm, full of pleasure. Her eyebrows were dark, arched as the rainbow or the half-moon. Her eyes too were dark, vibrant and sparkling; their circles were in part pointed, thus their shape was almondlike rather than circular. The hair of her lashes was completely black. Yes, her eyes were truly a mirror [*katoptron*] of *Eros*.

Later, while Hysminias and his beloved attend a banquet, he receives a cup from which Hysmine has already drunk and exclaims:

... καὶ νὴ τὸν Ἐρωτα τὴν παρθένον ἐδόκουν πίνειν αὐτήν· τὰ χείλη ταύτης κατεφίλουν ἐρωτικῶς καὶ φιλῶν ὑπέκλεπτον τὰ φιλήματα· ὑπηρέτην εἶχον τὸ ἔκπωμα τῆς ἐμῆς φιλῆς Τσιμίνης τὰ χείλη μετακομίζον μοι. Ἐξερρόφουν τοῦ πόματος καὶ νὴ τοὺς θεοὺς τοιοῦτον εἰς αὐτὴν κατέρρει μου τὴν ψυχήν, οἷον ἐν ὀνείροις ἀπὸ μαστῶν ἐξερρόφησα· καὶ περιεργότερον ὅλον ἔβλεπον τὸ ποτήριον, μή τι τοῦ χείλους τῆς κόρης τῷ χείλει τοῦ ποτηρίου κεκόλληται. Ἡ δὲ ὄρωσά μου καὶ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὸ βλέμμα καὶ τὴν μεθ' ἥδονῆς τοῦ πόματος ἀναρρόφησιν ἐρωτικῶς ἐμειδίᾳ καὶ Χάριτας ὅλας ὡς ἐν κατόπτροις ὑπεζωγράφησε τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ ὅλον τὸν Ἐρωτα.<sup>59</sup>

By *Eros*, I thought I was drinking the girl herself. I was kissing her lips in yearning and, as I kissed, I stole her kisses. The cup was my servant, bringing the lips of my beloved Hysmine to me.<sup>60</sup> I imbibed the drink, and (by the gods!) it flowed down into my very soul, just like the one I imbibed from her breasts in my

58 Eumathios Makrembolites 3.6.1–2, *De Hysmines et Hysminiae amoriibus libri XI*, ed. M. Marcovich (Munich, 2001).

59 Ibid. 5.11.6.

60 A similar motif is found in Tatius (*Leucippe and Clitophon* 2.1), without any association with mirroring.

dreams. I studied the entire cup curiously, lest some part of the girl's lip be stuck to the lip of the cup. When she saw my expression, my gaze, my pleasurable swallowing of the drink, she smiled sexily, and with her eyes she painted, as in mirrors [*katoptrois*], all kinds of charm and absolute desire, *Eros*.

In both passages, reflection is evoked when the male narrator expresses the erotic desire that has overwhelmed him, first in a dream and then in reality. At the moment in which his desire reaches its peak, the eyes of the beloved offer a clear image of *Eros*.<sup>61</sup> Unlike Psellos's Narcissus or Maria Komnene's mirror, Makrembolites' metaphorical mirrors transfer Byzantine constraints to a novelistic context. Here too reflection is governed by an androcentric gaze, since it is the girl's eyes that function as an object for the male viewer's reflected vision. More importantly, here too the mirror before Hysminias's eyes reflects not him but rather the God of desire, a superior other.<sup>62</sup>

A personal and desiring gaze at a reflection is further explored by Nikephoros Basilakes in a rhetorical exercise, a *progymnasma*, that most likely predates Makrembolites' novel.<sup>63</sup> The theme of this exercise is none other than the mythical Narcissus.<sup>64</sup>

61 A paragraph later (5.12.4), another erotic mirror catches the eye of Hysminias; the drink itself is a "mirror" of the girl and her pleasures.

62 In this respect, Makrembolites' mirror metaphor differs significantly from that in his model text, Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*; Tatius too uses the mirror metaphor but mirrors in his writing are never the means for the reflection of a deity, a superior other; see H. Morales, *Vision and Narrative in Achilles Tatius' Leucippe and Clitophon* (Cambridge, 2004), 130–40, with Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos*, 199–200. Panagiotis Roilos, who briefly discusses Makrembolites' mirror metaphors, posits that he draws on Plato (especially the mirror metaphor of *Phaedrus* 255d), though the Byzantine perspective on mirroring as outlined above seems to be the more immediate source; see P. Roilos, *Amphoterglossia: A Poetics of the Twelfth-Century Medieval Greek Novel* (Washington, DC, and Cambridge, MA, 2005), 178–80.

63 Dating is tricky here, of course. On Basilakes and his *progymnasma*, see S. Papaioannou, "On the Stage of *Eros*: Two Rhetorical Exercises by Nikephoros Basilakes," in *Theatron: Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, ed. M. Grünbart, Millennium Studien 13 (Berlin, 2007), 355–74, with further bibliography.

64 Nikephoros Basilakes, *Progymnasma* 16, in *Progymnasmata e monodie*, ed. A. Pignani, *Byzantina et neo-hellenica neapolitana* 10 (Naples, 1983).

Significantly, this is a new topic for Byzantine rhetorical exercises of this kind. As far as I can tell, the story of Narcissus was not revisited in Byzantium for several centuries following the texts of Philostratus, Callistratus, and Prokopios already mentioned. Is this renewed interest affected by Psellos's letter discussed above? Perhaps.<sup>65</sup> Whatever the case, Basilakes' *Narrative about Narcissus* or *Διήγημα τὸ κατὰ τὸν Νάρκισσον* does indeed adopt the Psellian sympathetic approach; we read again of how the earth "feels pity" for Narcissus, conveyed with the same word as used by Psellos: *oikteirein*.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, rather than decrying self-deception, Basilakes tells a story that concludes with the celebration of the happy metamorphosis of Narcissus into a flower that allows for his beauty to continue to "bloom." Much like Ovid's more widely known Narcissus, Basilakes' version celebrates a subject who, despite his failure, manages to survive in an

65 To Basilakes' progymnasma we should add a brief progymnasma-like epigram on Narcissus that survives in the folio of the Marcianus gr. 524, only five poems after the poem by Prodromos cited above. This 3-line epigram bears the title "Εἰς Νάρκισσον φυτὸν κλίνον εἰς ὅδωρ" (To Narcissus the Flower, leaning toward the Water); *Poem 343* (folio 182r), ed. S. P. Lampros, "Ο Μαρκιανὸς κῶδις 524," *Nέος Ελληνομνήμων* 8 (1911): 3–59, 123–92, at 181. While the name of the author is not given in the manuscript, the name of Psellos is referenced a couple of poems earlier on the same manuscript page in the title of what is now *Poem 34*, in *Michaelis Pselli Poemata*, ed. L. G. Westerink (Stuttgart, 1992); perhaps then the short Narcissus poem is also attributed to Psellos by the compiler of the anthology and we could therefore speak of a text in the Psellian tradition. Right before the poem on Narcissus is another short anonymous epigram titled "Απὸ Νάρκισσου φυτοῦ πρὸς Ζέφυρον" (*Poem 342*). The title is erroneous. The flower that is presented as speaking here is the hyacinth, addressing Zephyrus; for it is for Hyacinth's (not Narcissus's) love that, according to the myth, the wind Zephyrus competed with Apollo. The sequence Hyacinth-Narcissus is frequent in progymnasmatic texts, which are probably the source or, indeed, context of these two epigrams. See, e.g., Prokopios of Gaza, *Declamationes 1*, lines 32–35 on Hyacinth and 38–42 on Narcissus, ed. Garzya and Loenertz (n. 39 above); a similar order also in Severus (cf. n. 41 above). The story of Narcissus is also told by John Tzetzes as well as by Eustathios of Thessalonike in the 12th century; see *Chiliades 1.237–241* (ed. Leone [n. 1 above]; p. 11) and *Parekbolai 1.406.4–8*, respectively.

66 Basilakes also displays affinity with Psellos's letter by using the Psellian motif of supposed embarrassment when confronted with praises elsewhere in his writings; see *Discourse . . . on Alexios Aristenos = Or. B1*, in *Nicephori Basilacae orationes et epistolae*, ed. A. Garzya (Leipzig, 1984), 21.23–25, where Basilakes, after having profusely praised Aristenos, asks: "Have you not recognized your face, looking at my mirror [namely, my encomium for you]?"

intermediate condition—neither fully subjective, nor entirely objective—as a "blossoming flower."<sup>67</sup>

Male subjectivity is also at stake in another of the four twelfth-century novels, Niketas Eugeneianos's *Story of Drosilla and Charikles*.<sup>68</sup> Again, several parts of the story are told in the first person by male speakers. In book 2, a metaphorical mirror is mentioned; Kleandros, a friend of the protagonist Charikles, relates a ballad (*asma*) that he sang for his beloved Kalligone at night:

Λαμπάς σελήνης, φωταγώγει τὸν ξένον.  
‘Η Νιόβη κλαίουσα λίθος εύρεθη,  
μὴ καρτεροῦσα τὴν στέρησιν τῶν τέκνων.  
Πανδίονος δὲ θυγάτηρ παιδοκτόνος  
ἐξωρέωτο πτῆσιν αἰτησαμένη.

Λαμπάς σελήνης, φωταγώγει τὸν ξένον.  
Ἐγὼ δ' ἐσοπτρὸν εύρεθείην, Ζεῦ ἄναξ,  
ὅπως ἀεὶ βλέπης με σύ, Καλλιγόνη.  
χιτῶν γενοίμην χρυσόπαστος ποικίλος,  
ὅπως ἔχω σου θιγγάνειν τοῦ σαρκίου.<sup>69</sup>

*Torch of the moon, guide me, the stranger,  
with your light.*

Niobe, weeping, became a stone  
Unable to bear the loss of her children;  
Pandion's daughter, who killed her child,  
Seeking to flee, was turned into a bird.

*Torch of the moon, guide me, the stranger,  
with your light.*

67 Both Basilakes' and Ovid's tales about Narcissus end with an image of enduring *natural* beauty. Cf. Basilakes (lines 32–34), "οὐτῷ καὶ μετὰ τελευτὴν περίεστι Νάρκισσος καὶ αὐθὶς οὐδὲν ἡττον ἦ πρότερον εἰς κάλλος ἀνθεῖ," with Ovid (*Metamorphoses 3.507–8*, *P. Ovidii Nasonis metamorphoses*, ed. W. S. Anderson [Stuttgart, 1996]): "nusquam corpus erat; croceum pro corpore florem / inveniunt, foliis medium cingentibus albis." On the in-between position of Ovid's metamorphic subjects, see M. C. J. Putnam, "Ovid, Virgil and Myrrha's Metamorphic Exile," *Vergilius* 47 (2001): 171–93.

68 On Eugeneianos (a close friend of Theodoros Prodromos) and his *Drosilla and Charikles*, see *Drosilla and Charikles: A Byzantine Novel*, trans. with an introduction and explanatory notes by J. B. Burton (Wauconda, IL, 2004).

69 *The Story of Drosilla and Charikles 2.326–35, De Drosillae et Chariclis amoribus*, ed. G. Conca, London Studies in Classical Philology 24 (Amsterdam, 1990).

Might I, Lord Zeus, become a mirror  
 So that you, Kalligone, might always gaze at me.  
 Might I become your tunic embroidered with  
 gold,  
 Embellished, able to touch your body.<sup>70</sup>

Smitten and in hopes of finding reciprocation, Kleandros wishes to experience the kind of objectification that female mythological figures usually experience: desiring to be transformed like Niobe turned to stone or Pandion's daughter turned into a bird, Kleandros prays to become a garment for Kalligone or a mirror for the reflection of his beloved.<sup>71</sup> The mirror metaphor and the consequent subject position represented in this passage are not Eugeneianos's invention. Eugeneianos has rephrased and incorporated images from an epigram that is probably of Hellenistic or Roman Greek date.<sup>72</sup> This does not diminish but rather enhances the rhetorical work performed by Eugeneianos's metaphor. Like Psellos, Eugeneianos reenacts through the character of Kleandros a voice from the pre-Byzantine past and a type of metaphorical reflection that deviates from usual Byzantine decorum: a man is to become a mirror reflecting not the divine likeness, but the face of his beloved.

My last example is again from Makrembolites' novel. The description of Hysminias's beloved quoted above appears within the protagonist's dream. Before

expressing his experiences and emotions, Hysminias remarks:

Ἄμα γοῦν ἐγὼ περὶ τὸν ὄπνον . . . καὶ προφθάνει τὴν ἡμέραν καὶ τὸ δεῖπνον ἡ νύξ, καὶ πάνθ' ὅσ' ἔζήτουν ιδεῖν παθεῖν τε καὶ δρᾶσαι, ταῦθ' ὡς ἐν κατόπτροις τοῖς ὄνείροις καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἔπαθον. οὐ γάρ μοι καὶ τὸ δρᾶσαι τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐχαρίσατο.<sup>73</sup>

Soon I was about to sleep . . . and night anticipated the day and the dinner. In my dreams as if in mirrors [*katoptrois*], everything I sought to see, experience, and do, I saw and experienced; however, doing was not granted by the god.

The dream-space in which Hysminias experiences his initiation into desire is compared in this passage to a mirror-space. This space enables the creation of an imagined reality, as the continuation of the text makes clear: “ὅλον δεῖπνον ἀναπλάττει μοι τὸ ἐνύπνιον” (the dream *re-created* an entire dinner for me). The verb used by Makrembolites, *ana-plattein*, in Byzantium customarily denoted divine creation, but the term could also be used of creative imagination, deception, and often heretical fabrication. In rhetorical vocabulary, the stem *platt-* indicated fiction, and this is the connotation evoked by Makrembolites.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the stems *enoptr-* and *katoptr-* are associated with imagination and fictionality elsewhere in the novel. In book 4, Hysminias, driven by desire, “fashions mirror images” (*ἐνοπτριζόμενος*) of his beloved (who is absent in reality; 4.4.3); and later, in describing a painting, he remarks on the mirroring quality (*ώς ἐν κατόπτροις*) of artistic representation (4.7.3).<sup>75</sup>

70 Translation by Burton (39), here slightly adapted.

71 On Eugeneianos's use of Niobe, see Roilos, *Amphoterglossia*, 72–74; Psellos was the first to use the motif self-referentially, followed by Anna Komnene in the 12th century—see Psellos, *Letter 118*, in *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη. V: Μιχαήλ Υελλοῦ ιστορικοί λόγοι, ἐπιστολαὶ καὶ ἀλλα ἀνέδοτα*, ed. K. N. Sathas (1876; reprint, Athens, 1972), 365, 20, with *Alexias* 15.11.23–24, *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, ed. D. R. Reinsch and A. Kambylis (Berlin, 2001). The story of Procne and Philomela, Pandion's daughters, a story not commonly referred to in Byzantium before the 12th century, is retold by Tzetzes, *Chiliades* 7.142, and by Eustathios, *Comm. on Homer's Odyssey* 2.215.21–33, *Eustathii archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam*, ed. G. Stallbaum, 2 vols. in 1. (1825–26; reprint, Hildesheim, 1970).

72 The poem (*Anacr. 22*, in *Carmina Anacreontea*, ed. M. L. West [Leipzig, 1984]), along with other *Anacreontea*, survives in the mid-10th-century Palatine manuscript, in that part of the manuscript that is in Paris (Paris. suppl. gr. 384). It reads as follows: ‘Η Ταντάλου ποτ’ ἔστη / λίθος Φρυγῶν ἐν δχθαις, / καὶ παῖς ποτ’ δρυνές ἔπτη / Πανδίονος χελιδών. / ἐγὼ δ’ ἐσοπτρον εἴην, / ὅπως ἀεὶ βλέπηνες με. / ἐγὼ χιτών γενοίμην, / ὅπως ἀεὶ φορῆς με.

73 Eumathios Makrembolites 3.5.1 (ed. Marcovich [n. 53 above]).

74 Makrembolites uses the stem *platt-* recurrently in its various meanings. See further, for instance, Photios's *Bibliothékē* or Eustathios's *Parekbolai*, *passim*, but also Psellos's *Narcissus* letter cited above on Ixion's creative imagination. For *plasma* as a technical term, see also John Doxapates, *Rhetorical Homilies on Aphthonius' Progymnasmata*, in *Prolegomenon sylloge*, ed. H. Rabe, *Rethores Graeci* 14 (Leipzig, 1931), 136.19–137.5, discussed in Agapitos, “In Rhomaian, Frankish and Persian Lands” (n. 56 above). The term *drama*, also used recurrently by Makrembolites, belongs to the same semantic field; see n. 57 above.

75 For earlier use of the *optr-* stem to signify acts of imagination, see also Theodoros Daphnopates, *Letter 11.17–19*, in *Correspondance*, ed. J. Darrouzès and L. G. Westerink (Paris, 1978), with Psellos, *Letter 118* (ed. Sathas, 366.27–367.9).

This association of the mirror with fabrication and fiction is not new with Makrembolites. The idea is present in all the texts that refer to a moment of actual reflection. The mirrors of Kotertzes' servant, Makko, Theodora, and Narcissus produce what Eustathios of Thessalonike would call a reflected and unreal image, an *enoptrikē phantasia*.<sup>76</sup> What is new with Makrembolites

<sup>76</sup> Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Parekbolai* 4.119.5–17; see also *Suda* phi.862. The term, of Stoic origin, appears in several Roman Greek texts.

is that such appearance, created through reflection, is valued and, in fact, desired; Hysminias's experience is impossible without imagination. Here, perhaps for the first time in Byzantium, the mirror becomes a metaphor of literature itself—if we understand literature to be the *art*, and not simply the act, of self-reflection.

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